CONNECTING ALABAMA
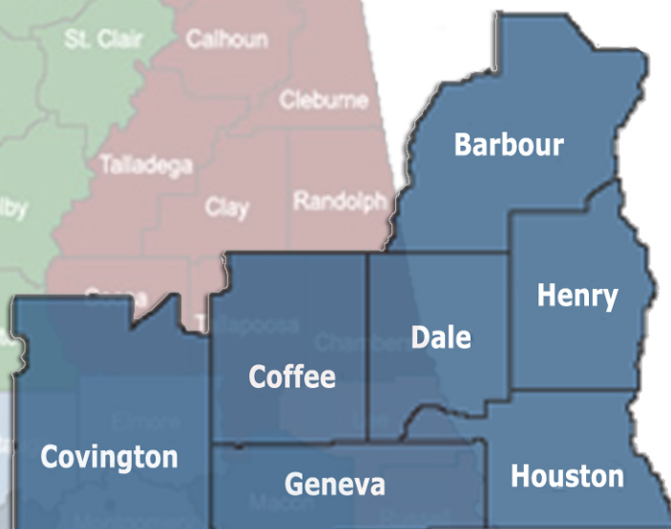
Regional Broadband Plan: Region 7
Southeast Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission

Barbour

Henry

Dale

Coffee

Covington

Geneva

Houston

CONNECTING ALABAMA

Region 7 Broadband Investment Plan

Barbour, Coffee, Covington, Dale, Geneva, Henry, and Houston Counties

FINAL – January 2012

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Regional Planning Council: Southeast Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission

Dear Citizens,

Today, high-speed Internet is transforming the landscape of America more rapidly and more pervasively than earlier infrastructure networks. Like railroads and highways, broadband accelerates the velocity of commerce, reducing the costs associated with going great distances. Like electricity, it creates a platform for America's creativity enabling better ways to solve old problems. Adding to the value of telephone and broadcasting, it expands our ability to communicate, inform and entertain.

Broadband is the great infrastructure challenge of the early 21st century. How will Alabama ready itself in the future months and years? How will Alabama measure up as it connects citizens to a technology that is changing how we educate children, deliver health care, manage energy, ensure public safety, engage government, and access, organize and disseminate knowledge? A number of people and organizations are currently working across Alabama to ensure our connected future and, without doubt, ConnectingALABAMA continues to play an important role in this work as the State's centerpiece to advancing the access and use of broadband.

ConnectingALABAMA's commitment to helping providers understand emerging opportunities and when appropriate, supporting public-private partnership efforts to expand infrastructure is crucial for the success of the State; but as with electricity and telephone, ubiquitous high speed Internet connections are means, not ends. For this reason, adoption and awareness are high priorities for ConnectingALABAMA. ConnectingALABAMA has partnered with (and mirrored the planning geographies of) the 12 regional planning councils within the State. The local regional planning councils have been invaluable partners throughout the Investment Planning process, and I want express my sincerest gratitude to them.

This Investment Plan will be like the Internet itself, always changing—adjusting to new developments in technologies and markets, reflecting new realities, and evolving to realize unforeseen opportunities. Completion and implementation of these investment plans are the short-term solutions Alabama needs, which will yield the long-term results we deserve. This is your region's plan; written by your region, for your region. Just as you played a vital role in the writing of the plan, **implementation cannot be done without you!**

As we determine our future actions, we must also keep in mind that the top ten jobs that were in demand in 2010, didn't exist in 2004. We are working to prepare Alabama students for jobs that don't yet exist, using technologies that haven't yet been invented, in order to solve problems we don't even know are problems yet.

There are no "cookie-cutter" solutions. Alabama is a diverse state with diverse needs. Fueled by the active participation of individuals all across the State, ConnectingALABAMA seeks to establish and empower a sustainable grass-roots focus on local solutions designed to address local priorities. Now and over the months to come, you are invited to join this important work for the State of Alabama and all who call her home.

ConnectingALABAMA's ultimate goal is for every citizen in the State of Alabama to have affordable and reliable access; until that happens we will work diligently, within our means, to provide Alabamians with the tools necessary to overcome obstacles and barriers, despite circumstance. This will be done so that they can have the quality of life they deserve, as well as assist them in making a difference not only in their lives, but in the lives of others. ConnectingALABAMA's future actions are simple: make a difference, one training, one connection, and one person at a time.

Jessica Dent
Executive Director

Region 7 Broadband Investment Plan

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Region 7 Introduction

Broadband is often referred to as the Nation's infrastructure challenge of our time. Once considered a luxury, broadband today is essential to grow the economy and improve the quality of life. Advancing the reach and application of broadband is clearly an important opportunity for all of Alabama. According to a 2011 National Telecommunications Information Agency (NTIA) study, Alabama ranked 48th in the country in broadband adoption in 2010, with an estimated 55.5 percent of the State's residents accessing the Internet using broadband. The ConnectingALABAMA initiative is the centerpiece to Alabama's work to address this challenge, and this Broadband Investment Plan for Barbour, Coffee, Covington, Dale, Geneva, Henry, and Houston Counties brings us one step closer to overcoming this challenge.

The benefits of expanding broadband communications are many. For example, expanding broadband access can help decrease the unemployment rate in the State, as many, if not most, job postings and application submissions are now completed online. Not only job seekers, but also businesses benefit; businesses located in rural areas are able to find the workforce they need to be successful by utilizing online resources. Furthermore, businesses can utilize broadband to expand their reach to new markets and lower costs as they can improve their overall operations efficiency.

Another valuable benefit of expanded broadband is distance learning. As fuel prices and traditional college tuition prices continue to rise to unprecedented levels, more and more people are left without the opportunity for a college education or even technical training. Distance learning provides educational opportunities for those that would otherwise not have the ability to continue their education past high school. When a population is placed at such a disadvantage, the number of untrained workers entering the workforce increases far past the number of untrained entry-level jobs available; this adds to the already high unemployment rate and negatively affects the State's economic competitiveness.

These are just two examples of how broadband can benefit Alabama communities and the State's economy. Infrastructure alone, however, is not the answer. People must be able to afford the service, have access to a computer (or internet-enabled mobile device), have confidence in using online tools, and be aware of the potential benefits.

Alabama is a diverse state; the needs and opportunities across the State are very different. ConnectingALABAMA recognizes this diversity and, as a result, has facilitated the creation of unique Broadband Investment Plans targeted to each of the 12 planning regions across the State. Region 7 is comprised of Barbour, Coffee, Covington, Dale, Geneva, Henry, and Houston Counties. By partnering with the Southeast Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission (SEARPDC), ConnectingALABAMA is able to reach out to various community organizations, elected officials, and business owners. The SEARPDC has been an invaluable partner throughout the planning process, and this Investment Plan would not have taken shape without the assistance of the Commission.

Input from a wide variety of sources was critical to the process of creating a strong Broadband Investment Plan that is locally driven and serves local needs. Non-profit organizations, community action agencies, local libraries, and various other community anchor institutions have been engaged through the course of this initiative. Elected officials that have been involved have included County Commissioners, Mayors, and City Council representatives. Internet Service Providers have also been very involved, with representatives from several local companies. County Sheriffs, E-911 operators, and local law enforcement entities have all contributed to valuable input from the public safety sector. The

Alabama Super Computer Authority has been very helpful throughout the planning process, providing valuable information and advice from the education sector. The education sector has also been well represented through participation from several local and county school systems, and a Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) grant awarded to Auburn University for Public Computing Centers will help nine libraries in Region 7 develop new computer workstations.

Region 7 also has a Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) grant awardee that will lay infrastructure in Region 7, Troy Cablevision. Troy Cablevision's project will extend connectivity in Coffee, Covington, and Dale counties within Region 7, while also expanding into Crenshaw and Pike counties outside the Region.

With Region 7's large geographic area creates challenges in serving geographically separated communities. Troy University, George C. Wallace Community College, and Lurleen B. Wallace Community College have historically served many of the needs of the residents of Region 7, and this initiative presents yet another opportunity for these community pillars to step up to the plate as they have so many times in the past. Also, a variety of non-profit organizations, community action agencies, technology experts, and entrepreneurs located throughout Region 7 could be used to help push broadband out into the rural areas of the Region. Rural areas that lack access in Region 7 are rapidly losing ground in an ever quickening global world.

The ConnectingALABAMA project has helped bring these stakeholders together to form a Region 7 Broadband Action Team (BAT). The first job of this team of local stakeholders was to agree upon priorities that can be accomplished in the short term that will yield long term results. The top three Region 7 priorities decided upon by BAT stakeholders are:

- ✓ Create Broadband Policy Education Program
- ✓ Develop a Small Business Broadband Awareness Campaign
- ✓ Conduct a Broadband Training Initiative

Discussions of other projects and priorities during the planning process include promoting access to/for agriculture sites (i.e. chicken houses, etc.) to monitor and improve operations, developing a plan to incorporate and synergize existing physical broadband assets (e.g. dark fiber), or urging technology retailers to provide various workshops for businesses and residents. Also discussed was creating a Regional Provider Relations Committee that would bring together providers to show demand in areas that are currently unserved or underserved. These future possibilities for the Region are further discussed in Appendix F.

While meetings have been held, discussions have taken place, and priorities have been voted on by Region 7 stakeholders, the work is just beginning. A plan is only as good as the support it receives from residents, business owners, elected officials, broadband providers, and others living and working in the Region. ConnectingALABAMA invites public review and comment of this plan. Public comments will be used to ensure it is responsive to the needs and possibilities for the Region. This Investment Plan is a living document and will be implemented within the Region by the Broadband Action Team; led and championed by the people within the communities of Region 7. ConnectingALABAMA will provide support to the Region with tools, technical assistance and analysis enabling the Region to monitor progress towards objectives and evaluate outcomes and impacts.

Priority 1 Overview

Broadband Policy Education Program

Throughout the ConnectingALABAMA Planning Meetings conducted in Region 7, service providers noted the difficulty they face in expanding their networks due to the lack of funding available from traditional sources. Fiber and other network assets are not considered capital by traditional sources, limiting opportunities to obtain loans for network expansion. Region 7's Broadband Action Team reached the agreement to establish a Program and Committee consisting of providers and community members, with the purpose of educating Regional and State decision-makers in not only the benefits of Broadband, but potential solutions for the policy issues that can advance availability and adoption. In developing this Program, it is vital to assemble a diverse group of individuals, businesses, community organizations, underrepresented groups, and concerned citizens along with provider representatives.

High-speed Internet access, which was once a luxury, has become a necessity. With these obstacles, the development of programs such as a Statewide Broadband Loan Guarantee Program or Statewide Broadband Incentives can play an important role expansion of broadband infrastructure not only across Region 7, but across the entire State. Broadband is an important tool that allows users to seek job opportunities, increase their current skill-sets by means of online learning opportunities, complete and research homework assignments, manage personal banking, research health disorders and issues, in addition, it provides the opportunity for citizens to work from the convenience of their homes.

Priority 2 Overview

Small Business Broadband Awareness Campaign

A campaign aimed at informing and educating small business owners and operators of the Region will serve to provide the knowledge necessary to capitalize on broadband opportunities for advertising, market expansion, and business efficiency.

The immediate goal of a Small Business Broadband Awareness Campaign is to equip current small businesses across the Region with the skills and training to better their business. Many small businesses remain unaware of the benefits and uses of broadband. An Awareness Campaign would serve to introduce these benefits to small businesses while providing education on the various uses, benefits, and applications available through broadband.

In order for small businesses to survive, compete, and grow in today's global and ever-quickening market, they must be as efficient as possible. Broadband Internet access allows small businesses to market their product or service far beyond traditional geographic boundaries. It also permits more cost-effective and efficient processing of large volumes of transactions than can be achieved with slower dial-up services. This means that "connected" businesses can expand their markets; and, as they do, these businesses can grow and add jobs. This awareness campaign has the potential to expand horizons and raise ceilings. Broadband awareness and access can open doors to opportunities currently unavailable not only for small businesses, but also to the residents and leaders of Region 7.

Priority 3 Overview

<u>Broadband Training Initiative</u>

Broadband training for the communities in the Region 7 Counties will provide the opportunity for the Region to participate in the many benefits of broadband. Because technology advances so rapidly, many in the workforce do not understand the potential of today's technology or have not been trained in newer programs or applications. These skills might not only be necessary for increased job functionality or career advancement.

Current employees can be trained to learn new electronic data applications, as well as to manage online programs. Those in a position, volunteer or paid, who monitor computer usage, perhaps at a public library or in a school environment, need to be versed on current technology in order to best assist those utilizing the computers and Internet access.

Throughout the ConnectingALABAMA Planning Meetings, attendees reached the agreement that community-based training for all citizens, including business owners, governmental agencies, non-profits, etc., should be the focus for the Region's counties.

Broadband training can be a key asset to workforce development within Region 7. Providing skills to the workforce would be a major step toward lowering unemployment in the Region. By working with local businesses, labor forces, and government entities in their communities to create tailored education and training programs, it is possible to meet employers' needs and give the workforce of Region 7 the skills required to obtain and retain good jobs, earn family-sustaining wages, and advance along a career pathway.

Key Regional Assets

In order to accomplish the priorities mentioned in the previous pages, it is vital for the Region to build upon existing assets. By utilizing these assets and creating partnerships with organizations, priorities can be accomplished more effectively and efficiently. A more elaborate list of assets can be found in Appendix A.

One such asset is Auburn University and the Center of Government who received an award from the U.S. Department of Commerce for $4.6 million to expand the availability of broadband technology in Alabama's rural libraries and public schools. Other institutions of higher education also play an integral part in the region's broadband success. Overall the initiative will deploy 1,180 new computer workstations and replace nearly 915 more at 102 rural libraries and 37 public schools across Alabama. Please visit http://www.auburn.edu/outreach/cgs/BTOP/broadbandmap.html for a complete list of the libraries and schools affected.

Currently, there are 20 local libraries in Region 7, many of which have computer labs available for training. Also, many libraries, including the Houston Love Memorial Library in Dothan, provide free computer classes for all ages and abilities. Three Institutions of Higher Learning offer computer courses and/or computer labs available to the public.

Another training asset in the region is a program developed by Auburn University, in partnership with ADECA to expand public awareness of broadband opportunities through each of the 67 county Extension Coordinators. Each County Extension office will offer training models to its local communities. These training programs could also be offered in a variety of venues, including Public Computing Centers. http://www.aces.edu/main/

The local regional planning council serves as an asset not only to Region 7, but to ConnectingALABAMA as well, and provides connections to all area local governments. The Southeast Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission is the region's planning and development organization that serves member governments by managing programs, promoting collaborative efforts, and serving as a clearinghouse for federal, state, and local funds. http://www.searpdc.org/

Wiregrass Incubator Alliance serves as a small business incubator and launching point for economic development. Small business incubators like these can be an invaluable resource to entrepreneurs and economic developers. The Wiregrass Incubator Alliance has 4 locations across Region 7. http://wiregrassincubatoralliance.org/

The Region 7 Broadband Action Team (BAT) is a key asset, as its primary task in this Investment Plan is committee development. Committee development is essential to each Regional Priority, as it allows regions to independently formulate, implement, and evaluate the success of specifically established priorities. Committees, with dedicated community participants, will conduct meetings to establish its members, elect a chair, determine the responsibilities of members, construct recommendations, and coordinate meeting logistics.

Priority Investment Snapshot

This page presents in bullet summary form the major activities associated with each priority.

Priority Investment	Activities
Priority 1: Broadband Policy Education Program	• Establish Committee • Establish Committee Governance • Research • Develop Targeted Program • Implement Targeted Program
Priority 2: Small Business Broadband Awareness Campaign	• Establish Small Business Broadband Awareness Committee • Identify Partners • Conduct Campaign • Conduct Workshops • Continued Monitoring
Priority 3: Broadband Training Initiative	• Establish Committee • Create an Online Training Manual • Conduct Training Workshops • Continued Monitoring

Priority 1: Broadband Policy Education Program

By establishing a Broadband Policy Education Program that brings together providers and community members, the Region will have a focal point to educate leaders and decision-makers, in not only the benefits of Broadband, but potential solutions for broadband policy issues.

Key Tasks
The development of a Broadband Policy Education Program can help to support the expansion of broadband infrastructure not only across Region 7, but throughout the State. In developing this Program, it is vital to assemble a diverse group of individuals, service providers, businesses, community organizations, underrepresented groups, and concerned citizens.

1.1 Organize and Establish the Broadband Policy Education Committee

Members will play a vital role in organizing, researching, and educating state leadership on the benefits of broadband and how state policy affects broadband expansion. The Region 7 Broadband Action Team will, as previously determined by the Regional Coordinator, determine the members a Policy Education Program, along with a chair or main point of contact. Specific organizing tasks include:

- Discuss the duties of the Committee.
- Determine the roles of each member.
- Elect a chair.
  - Committee members will schedule a meeting to elect a chair.
- Determine responsibilities of chair and members.

1.2 Research Existing Broadband Policy Solutions and Develop Best Practices Report
Broadband development policies and strategies from other states and areas will be researched and utilized as a guide for Committee.

- Research Current Broadband Policy Issues and Solutions. Includes, but not limited to:
  - Existing Statewide Broadband Loan Guarantee Programs in other states.
  - Successful projects that are the result of loan guarantee programs.
  - Existing Broadband Infrastructure Incentives in other states.
  - Successful projects that are a result of Broadband Incentives.

- Develop Best Practices Report, outlining the need and opportunities for Broadband Policy Education and Best Practices, including examples of success.

1.4 Develop and Implement Targeted Broadband Policy Education Program
  - Organize and delivery policy education targeted to elected officials and community leaders.
  - Establish inclusive process to receive input, questions, or concerns from elected officials and community leaders.

Outcomes

- ✓ Organize and Establish Policy Education Committee.
- ✓ Research Existing Broadband Policy Initiatives and Effectiveness
- ✓ Develop Report including Best Practices and Recommendations of Committee.
- ✓ Advocate for the creation of programs, such as a Statewide Loan Guarantee Program dedicated to Broadband Infrastructure expansion.

Three-Year Objectives

- ✓ Organize for effective policy education to advance solutions improving broadband availability and access.
- ✓ Ensure elected officials and community leaders are well informed on the benefits of Broadband.
- ✓ Ensure elected officials and community leaders are well informed on the benefits of a Statewide Broadband Loan Guarantee Program and other beneficial inititiatives.

By 2014: The creation of a Statewide Broadband Loan Guarantee Program for Broadband Infrastructure expansion.

Recommended Resources

These recommended resources are only estimates; costs need to be evaluated based on location needs and services/equipment provided by partners. Budgets will need to be adapted based on Committee decisions and location needs.

Resource	Detail	Cost
7-10 Committee Volunteers	For committee development and implementation	
Printing and Binding of Best Practices Report	250 at approx. $10/ea *Actual number of copies will need to be determined by Committee*	$2,500
Other print materials	For education and advocacy	$1,000
Postage and Misc.		**$1,000**
	Total	**$4,500**

Committee members will utilize their resources such as personal computer and equipment, Internet, and telephone and fax lines in order to develop the committee and perform committee business. Any staff or separate office space required for this priority will need to be calculated into a budget.

Sustainability Plan

The best sustainability tool the Committee will have at their disposal will be partnerships. Opportunities and assets are abundant throughout Region 7, and healthy partnerships will ensure the continuation of the Committee as they attempt to accomplish their mission. Continued advocacy and education until policies are changed and affordable, reliable access is readily available throughout the State and Region.

Priority 2: Small Business Broadband Awareness Campaign

For small businesses, broadband can be a game changer. It can serve to level the playing field between rural and metropolitan communities, or between small businesses and much larger businesses. Broadband can help support the survival of the traditional small business well into the future.

Key tasks
A campaign aimed at informing and educating the small business owners and operators of the Region will serve to provide the knowledge necessary to capitalize on broadband opportunities for workforce development, advertising, market expansion, and business efficiency.

2.1 Establish a Small Business Broadband Awareness Committee
The Region 7 Broadband Action Team will, as previously determined by the Regional Coordinator, needs to determine the members of an Awareness Campaign Committee, along with a chair or main point of contact. Responsibilities of the Committee include:

➢ Provide a focal point for local networking to support implementation of the business awareness campaign.
➢ Identify areas or pockets of the Region where education and awareness programs can be beneficial.
➢ Determine best way to target selected areas utilizing Public Service Announcements, print media or via the Internet; and campaign materials.
➢ Develop relationships with area service providers to participate in broadband awareness campaign.
➢ Committee Chair creates and maintains relationships with ConnectingALABAMA and Auburn University (through the ADECA partnership).

2.2 Identify Partners
The Committee will work to identify partners. These partners can include Internet Service Providers, local businesses, government officials, private citizens, and any with an interest in expanding the benefits of broadband throughout small business, as well as those with current resources to help offset costs. Potential partnership roles include:

➢ Identify financial and in-kind resources.
➢ Access relevant existing materials and helpful tools.
➢ Support composition of campaign materials and outreach by working with printing companies, radio stations, television stations, production companies, graphic design agencies, etc., to compose and publish materials for an economical cost or at no charge.

2.3 Conduct Small Business Awareness Campaign
The committee and partners will mobilize the campaign by publicly distributing materials via physical business locations, or through outlets such as existing media campaigns, Web sites, newsletters or other public venues.

➢ Design and print flyers or brochures to be distributed in public places.

- ➢ Utilize the Web sites and print media of partners and area businesses to promote the Awareness Campaign, along with already existing outlets such as newsletters (for example: ConnectingALABAMA's "Up to Speed").
- ➢ Utilize video materials such as the Statewide Outreach Program created through the ADECA's grant in partnership with Auburn University.

2.4 Conduct Small Business Workshops

The Committee will utilize technology networks to offer free or cost effective opportunities for communities to receive technology training.

- ➢ Determine locations such as community colleges, public computing center, or public libraries to host training workshops.
- ➢ Develop contact list for of small businesses throughout the Region to notify of training opportunities.
- ➢ Schedule workshops.
- ➢ Distribute flyers promoting training workshops.
- ➢ Promote current resources such as public computer centers, library access, and training through County Extension Coordinators through the Auburn University/ADECA grant.
- ➢ Establish online classes or work sessions for extended training or questions, or for those unable to attend workshops.

2.5 Committee Continues to Monitor Training and Needs

Due to rapidly changing and advancing technology, Committee will remain active and continue to monitor the needs of the Region's small businesses to:

- ➢ Determine the types and frequencies of future technology training based upon success of initial workshops.
- ➢ Maintain partnerships with technology trainers and centers to offer courses when necessary.
- ➢ Seek any future funding necessary to support any training or staff not available through volunteers or donated facilities.
- ➢ Report usage, as tracked by Auburn University of its training modules and Cooperative Extension Offices as training facilities and report usage to the ConnectingALABAMA regional coordinator.

Outcomes

- ✓ Establish Small Business Broadband Awareness Committee.
- ✓ Establish diverse partnerships supporting the campaign.
- ✓ Conduct Small Business Awareness Campaign by designing and distributing materials through agreed upon media and outlets.
- ✓ Conduct Small Business Workshops.
- ✓ Monitor and evaluate progress.

Three Year Objectives

- ✓ Increased Small Business Usage and Utilization of Broadband.
- ✓ Increase Efficiency of Small Businesses.

By 2014: Increase Small Business usage and adoption of Broadband to increase their efficiency and profitability.

Recommended Resources

These recommended resources are only estimates; costs for awareness campaign need to be evaluated based on geographical needs and services/equipment provided by partners. The estimated cost below is to serve as a guide only. It is best to utilize partnerships to obtain donated services and equipment whenever possible.

Resource	Detail	Cost
7-10 Committee Volunteers	For development/implementation of program	
4 Instructors (Volunteer)	Approximately 48 hours of instruction total for workshops	
Graphic Designer *print media*	$50/hr approx. 20 hours	$1,000
Printing of awareness campaign	50,000 brochures *Actual number of copies will need to be determined by Committee*	$10,000
Mailing of one-fourth of print media	12,500 pieces, first-class *Actual number will need to be determined by Committee*	$5,500
	Total	**$16,500**

Committee members will utilize their resources such as personal computer and equipment, Internet, and telephone and fax lines in order to develop the committee and perform committee business. Any staff or separate office space required for this priority will need to be calculated into a budget.

Sustainability Plan

The best sustainability tool the Small Business Broadband Awareness Committee will have at their disposal will be partnerships. Opportunities and assets are abundant throughout Region 7, and healthy partnerships will ensure the success of the Committee well into the future. In addition, because funding opportunities present themselves frequently, the committee will be required to perform continuous research and submit applications when necessary.

Priority 3: Broadband Training Initiative

Educational outreach aimed at informing and educating the elected officials, businesses, and residents of the Region will serve to provide the knowledge necessary to make informed decisions regarding the implementation of broadband and future of broadband development and encourage new local champions.

The immediate goal of a broadband training initiative is to increase the broadband knowledge and adoption levels across the Region. Public/private leaders and area residents with many responsibilities are often unaware of the benefits and uses of broadband. A broadband training campaign can introduce these benefits to the general public by educating as to its various uses and applications.

Key tasks

To accomplish the Region's goal of creating a Broadband Training Initiative, community dedication and commitment are the leading factors to accomplishing this priority.

3.1 Develop Broadband Training Committee

Developing the Broadband Training Committee is the first step in this priority, and the Broadband Action Team (BAT), as previously determined by the Regional Coordinator, will need to determine the members, along with a chair or main point of contact. The following are key responsibilities.

- ➢ Committee Members network with each other and through their organizations to determine the following:
  - Identify areas or pockets of the Region where there is a need for additional technology skills training.
    - o Develop survey or requests for needs to be distributed through government offices, Chambers of Commerce, etc.
  - Identify those individuals or organizations with technology skills or training that can be shared with others.
    - o Develop survey or requests for needs to be distributed through area computer/technology businesses, community colleges and technical schools.
    - o Determine how other current programs or grants can be leveraged for this task such as the Auburn University grant and ADECA Partnership where libraries are being upgraded or modules being taught through these libraries or County Extension Coordinators.

- ➢ Develop relationships with area technology schools and training programs.
- ➢ Seek any funding necessary to support any training and materials not available through volunteers or donated facilities.
- ➢ Committee Chair creates and maintains relationships with ConnectingALABAMA and Auburn University (through the ADECA partnership).

3.2 Create a Training Manual

The Committee will determine a subcommittee to work with identified technology training programs and individuals utilizing the information gathered of skills needed in various areas to develop a manual for those needing training.

➢ Identify model Broadband Training Manuals and determine if there are opportunities for adapting content for Alabama.
➢ Comprise resources and existing Training Manuals into an online training manual on Internet Safety.
    o Include contact information for volunteers willing to help answer questions or offer guidance; include list of other online resources.
➢ Utilizing partners, determine Web sites to post the online training manual on for public distribution.

3.3 Conduct Workshops

The Committee will utilize established technology network to offer free or cost effective opportunities for communities to receive broadband training

➢ Identify training partners.
➢ Determine locations such as community colleges, public computing center, or public libraries to host training courses.
➢ Develop contact list for government agencies, Chambers of Commerce, etc to notify of training opportunities.
➢ Establish online classes or work sessions for extended training or questions, or for those unable to attend workshops.
➢ Determine public sectors in need of technology training and distribute printed materials promoting training courses.
➢ Promote current resources such as public computer centers, library access, and training through County Extension Coordinators through the Auburn University/ADECA grant.

3.4 Committee Continues to Monitor Training and Needs

Due to rapidly changing and advancing technology, Committee will remain active and continue to monitor the needs of the Region's community leaders and public sectors to:

➢ Determine the types and frequencies of future technology training based upon success of initial workshops.
➢ Maintain partnerships with technology trainers and centers to offer courses when necessary.
➢ Auburn University will develop a way to track use of its training modules and Cooperative Extension Agencies as training facilities and report usage to the ConnectingALABAMA regional coordinator.

Outcomes

- ✓ Develop a Broadband Training Committee to determine the technology needs and resources for the Region.
- ✓ Create an online Training Manual.
- ✓ Conduct Workshops.
- ✓ Leverage current resources such as the Auburn University/ADECA partnership and establishing training for the public.
- ✓ Committee Continues to Monitor Training and Needs to determine future needs of the Region's community leaders and public sectors.

Three-Year Objectives

- ✓ Develop network of technology training instructors and facilities, and the need for training
- ✓ Implement training workshops.
- ✓ Develop skilled workforce through community leaders and private citizens.

By 2014: Increase marketability of the Region as tech-savvy area with highly skilled workforce in order to increase economic stability and reduce unemployment rate.

Recommended Resources
These recommended resources are only estimates; costs need to be evaluated based on location needs and services/equipment provided by partners. Actual budgets will need to be adapted based on Committee decisions and location needs. The estimates below are for one center.

Resource	Detail	Cost
7-10 Committee Volunteers	For development of campaign and distribution of materials	
5 Workshop/Training Volunteers		
Workshop Printed Materials	Per 5,000 (8.5 x 11 inch pages) *Actual number of copies will need to be determined by Committee*	**$1,000**
	Total	**$1,000**

Committee members will utilize their resources such as personal computer and equipment, Internet, and telephone and fax lines in order to develop the committee and perform committee business. Any staff or separate office space required for this priority will need to be calculated into a budget.

Sustainability Plan

The best sustainability tool the Broadband Training Campaign has at their disposal will be partnerships developed through the Committee. Opportunities and assets are abundant throughout Region 7, and healthy partnerships between organizations are important to the success of not only this priority, but the Region.

Monitoring and Evaluation

It is important to remember that this Investment Plan is a living document and will change as existing priorities are accomplished and new projects are selected by the Broadband Action Team. This plan will be implemented within the Region by the Broadband Action Team, while led and championed by the people within the communities of Region 7. ConnectingALABAMA will provide support to the Region with tools, technical assistance and analysis enabling the Region to monitor progress towards objectives and evaluate outcomes and impacts.

Appendix A: Region 7 Regional Assets

Four-Year Colleges

- Troy University Dothan – Dothan, AL http://www.troy.edu/

Two-Year Colleges

- George C. Wallace Community College – Dothan & Eufaula, AL http://www.wallace.edu/
- Lurleen B. Wallace Community College – Andalusia & Opp, AL
  http://www.lbwcc.edu/about_lbwcc/campus_locations.aspx

Alabama Cooperative Extension System – One training asset in the Region is a program developed by Auburn University, in partnership with ADECA to expand public awareness of broadband opportunities through each of the 67 The Alabama Cooperative Extension System County Extension Coordinators. Each County office will offer the training models to its communities. These training programs could also be offered in a variety of venues, including Public Computing Centers. http://www.aces.edu/
- Barbour County Extension Office
- Coffee County Extension Office
- Covington County Extension Office
- Dale County Extension Office
- Geneva County Extension Office
- Henry County Extension Office
- Houston County Extension Office

Auburn University Center of Government - The U.S. Department of Commerce has awarded Auburn University Outreach $4.6 million to expand the availability of broadband technology in Alabama's rural libraries and public schools. Overall, the initiative will deploy 1,180 new computer workstations and replace nearly 915 more at 102 rural libraries and 37 public schools across Alabama. (Participating libraries in this region are indicated below with an asterisk) http://www.auburn.edu/outreach/cgs/BTOP/BTOP.html

Public Libraries

- *Houston Love Memorial Library – Dothan, Ashford, & Columbia, AL: Houston County Public Library. Recently completed a community survey in which they identified trends, needs, and community interest in several different areas. As a result, they list "Connect to the Online World" as their #1 Service Goal. By FY11, they plan to offer Wi-Fi at all library branches, have their staff trained to educate customers on online resources, schedule additional public internet training classes, and increase access points and technology applications available at all library branches. http://www.houstonlovelibrary.org/
- *Ozark Dale County Public Library – Ozark, AL: Provides free internet access to Public. http://www.odcpl.com/
- Opp Public Library – Opp, AL: Provides free internet access to Library card holders.
- *Louisville Public Library – Louisville, AL http://www.opplibrary.com/
- Eufaula Carnegie Library – Eufaula, AL http://www.ecl.lib.al.us/
- Town and County Public Library – Clayton, AL http://towncountylib.org/
- Elton B. Stephens Library – Clio, AL
- *Enterprise Public Library – Enterprise, AL http://www.enterpriselibrary.org/

- *Elba Public Library – Elba, AL http://www.elbaalabama.net/life-in-elba/library
- Florala Public Library – Florala, AL http://www.floralalibrary.com/
- Andalusia Public Library – Andalusia, AL
- Ariton-Dot Laney Memorial Library – Ariton, AL
- Newton Public Library – Newton, AL
- Daleville Public Library – Daleville, AL http://www.dalevilleal.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=14&Itemid=17
- *McGregor-McKinney Public Library – Hartford, AL
- *Slocomb Public Library – Slocomb, AL
- Emma Knox Kenan Public Library – Geneva, AL
- Henry County Library Authority – Abbeville, AL
- *Abbeville Memorial Library – Abbeville, AL http://www.cityofabbeville.org/library.html
- *Geneva Public Library – Geneva, AL http://www.genevapubliclibrary.org/

Generations On-line - Dothan, AL: Free computer training for anyone 55 or older. Seniors can sign up for a One hour session with a personal peer coach. Generations On-line has created software that simplifies the internet using easy to follow, on screen instructions and options. http://www.generationsonline.com/

Family Guidance Center of Alabama – Dothan, AL: Provides free computer classes for all ages and abilities. Classes are offered for beginners and more experienced users, as well as children and high school-age youth. http://www.familyguidancecenter.org/

Appendix B: Region 7 Overview

Counties and Communities:

Seven counties, Barbour, Coffee, Covington, Dale, Geneva, Henry, and Houston make up Region 7. Dozens of small towns and cities with the majority having populations lower than 3,000 people are included within the Region. Dothan is the largest city in the Region with an estimated population of over 57,000 people. Among other larger communities in the Region are Enterprise (21,178), Ozark (15,119), Eufaula (13,908), Andalusia (8,794) and Opp (6,607). Several other cities in the Region have populations between 2,000 and 5,000 people.

Population:

Region 7 Percent Population Change 2000 to 2010
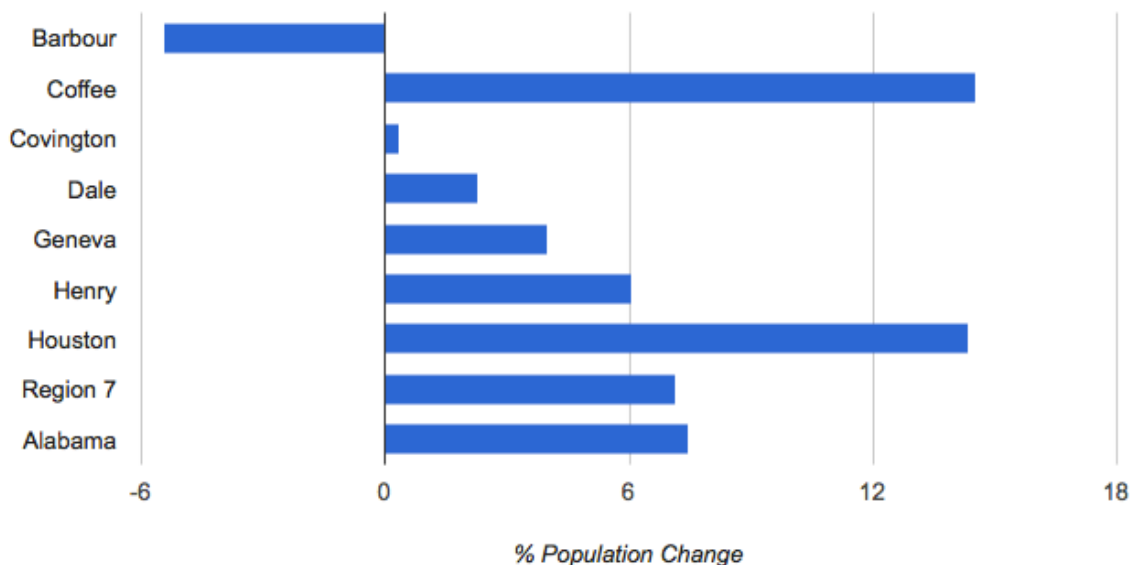
Source: U.S. Census of Population 2010

With the exception of Barbour County, the population in all seven counties increased between 2000 and 2010 Census years. Population declined 5.4 percent in Barbour County, with a loss of 1,581 people. Houston County experienced the largest percentage population growth: 14.4 percent of its population over the past decade. Overall, total population in the seven County Southeast Region increased from 290,274 in 2000 to 311,060 in 2010 (7.2 percent). During this time period, the State's population grew 7.5 percent.

Compared to the State, the Region is more rural with an average of 64 people per square mile compared to an average of 94 people per square mile for the State. Henry County is the least densely populated county in the Region with an average of 31 people per square mile.

Demography:

The portion of the Region's population over the age of 65 is greater in the Southeast Region compared to the State average. Approximately 16 percent of the Region's population is older than 65 compared to an average of about

14 percent of the State's population being older than 65. In Covington County, more 19 percent of the population are estimated to be older than 65.

The percentage of white demographic in the Region 74 percent is higher than average for the State 71 percent. Blacks make up a substantial proportion of the total population of Barbour County at about 49 percent. Overall, an estimated 3 percent of the Region's population is Hispanic which is equal to that of the State.

Education and Income:

Consistent with the overall trends of the State, a lower proportion of the population in the Region has graduated from high school compared to the Nation. In the Southeast Alabama Region, 70.4 percent of persons over the age of 25 have a high school diploma or higher. This compares with 75.3 percent for the State and 80.4 percent for the Nation. Barbour County has the lowest high school educational attainment with an estimated 64.7 percent of that County's population over the age of 25 with a high school diploma or higher. In Dale and Houston Counties, more than 76 percent of the adult population have a high school diploma or greater.

The proportion of the population graduating from a four-year degree program is lower than for the State average. Just under 14 percent of the Region's population older than 25 have a Bachelor's degree or higher. This compares with 19 percent for the State and 24.4 percent for the Nation. In fact, all seven counties in the Region have a lower proportion of the population over 25 with a Bachelor's degree than the State average with the exception of Coffee County at 19.3 percent. Geneva County has 8.7 percent of the adult population with a Bachelor's degree or higher.

2007 per capita income in the Region is $28,011 compared to an average of $32,419 for the State of Alabama. The highest per capita income levels are in Houston County ($33,462) and the lowest in Barbour County ($23,663). Poverty rates follow per capita income, with a 2008 poverty rate in Barbour County of 25 percent compared to 15 percent in Coffee, Dale and Houston Counties. On average, the poverty rate for the Region is 18 percent compared to and 16 percent rate for the State.

Appendix C: Region 7 Economy

Economic Engines:

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics organizes data into ten sectors reflected key economic drivers in the modern economy. March 2010 employment in each of these sectors for Region 7 is depicted in the following table.

2010 Region 7 Employment by Major Sector

Economic Sector	Q1 2010 Regional Employment	Employment Change 2007 - 2010	Sector % of Regional Total (2010)	Sector % of State Total (2010)
Construction	4,661	-1,145	4.24%	4.84%
Educ./Health Services (Private sector only)	13,498	355	12.28%	11.43%
Financial Activities	3,649	-640	3.32%	4.98%
Government	22,530	406	20.50%	20.61%
Information Services	1,073	-233	0.98%	1.36%
Leisure & Hospitality	9,752	-806	8.88%	9.19%
Manufacturing	19,371	-3,234	17.63%	13.04%
Natural Resource and Mining	1,511	-172	1.38%	1.07%
Other Services	2093	-271	1.90%	2.49%
Professional/Business Services	7,604	-1,339	6.92%	11.28%
Trade/Transportation & Utilities	23,977	-1,719	21.82%	19.69%
Regional Total	109,879	-8,710	100%	100%

Source: US Bureau of Labor and Statistics, 2007 - 2010

The above table does not include direct federal employment at Fort Rucker Military base near Dothan. Fort Rucker is the single largest economic driver for the Region. In March 2010, there were approximately 109,879 civilian jobs in Region 7.

Non-military federal, state, and local jobs represent just over a fifth of the Region's employment base. The major sector trade, transportation, and utilities also employs just over a fifth of the Region's workforce. This followed by manufacturing, which employs nearly 20,000 workers. Health care and education are also important economic engines for the Region.

Economic Trends:

As was the case for most of the State, total employment declined significantly between 2007 and 2010. Overall, the Region experienced a net job loss of 8,710 jobs during this time period. Net job loss was highest in manufacturing where 3,234 jobs were lost. Other sectors losing more than 1000 jobs were trade, transportation and utilities, construction as well as professional and business services. The majors sectors of government as well as education and health care had slight gains between 2007 and March 2010.

Major Employers:

In addition to Fort Rucker, the following are examples of large employers for the Region.

City of Dothan
Dothan City & Houston County School Systems
Flowers Hospital
Southeast Alabama Medical Center
Southern Nuclear (Plantt Farley)

Workforce Challenges:

Workforce improvement is an important component of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for the Southeast Alabama Region. Alabama has formed "Workforce Regions to determine the workforce and skill needs throughout the State", including Southeast Alabama. As a result, The Southeast Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission has begun partnering with the Region 10 Workforce Development Regional Council to secure funding to support aviation and nursing training, two of the most critical needs in the Region.

More generally, improving education is vital because a highly educated and productive workforce is a critical economic development and individual opportunity. The educational and training requirements of high-demand, fast-growing, and high-earning occupations show the significance of education in developing the workforce of the future. Employers should be an integral part of planning for training, as well as engagement with the Region's education sector, as they can help identify future skill needs and any existing gaps.

The Regional Workforce Development Council serving counties in the Region 7 planning area has identified several strategic workforce development goals including:

- Facilitate awareness of development opportunities and resources for workers and employers.
- Strengthen work ethic.
- Develop and enhance training programs to meet regional needs.
- Maximize funds for workforce training, job development and other workforce goals.

Commuting Patterns:

In 2000 there were 17,600 in- and out-commuters for the Dothan metropolitan region, with a net of 960 in-commuters. By 2006, the number of in- and out-commuters had risen sharply to 44,296 but the situation had reversed to a net of 1,560 residents who commuted out for work. Commute time and distance for workers were both up in 2009, and have been rising since 2004. All of this points to worsening congestion, which can delay or slow economic development by impeding the flow of goods and movement of workers. It is therefore essential that the Region's transportation infrastructure and systems be continuously maintained and developed to ensure uninterrupted mobility of workers and goods. Also, there are opportunities for telecommuting both to create jobs and reduce congestion in the Dothan area.

Appendix D: Region 7 Broadband Availability

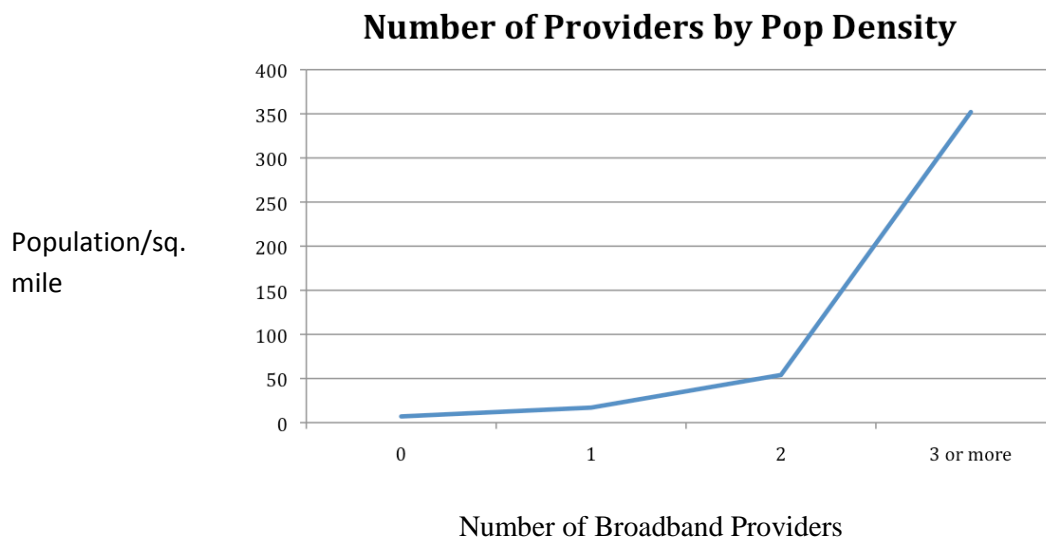**Gaps in Broadband Service**

Broadband Service Coverage in Region 7 Area
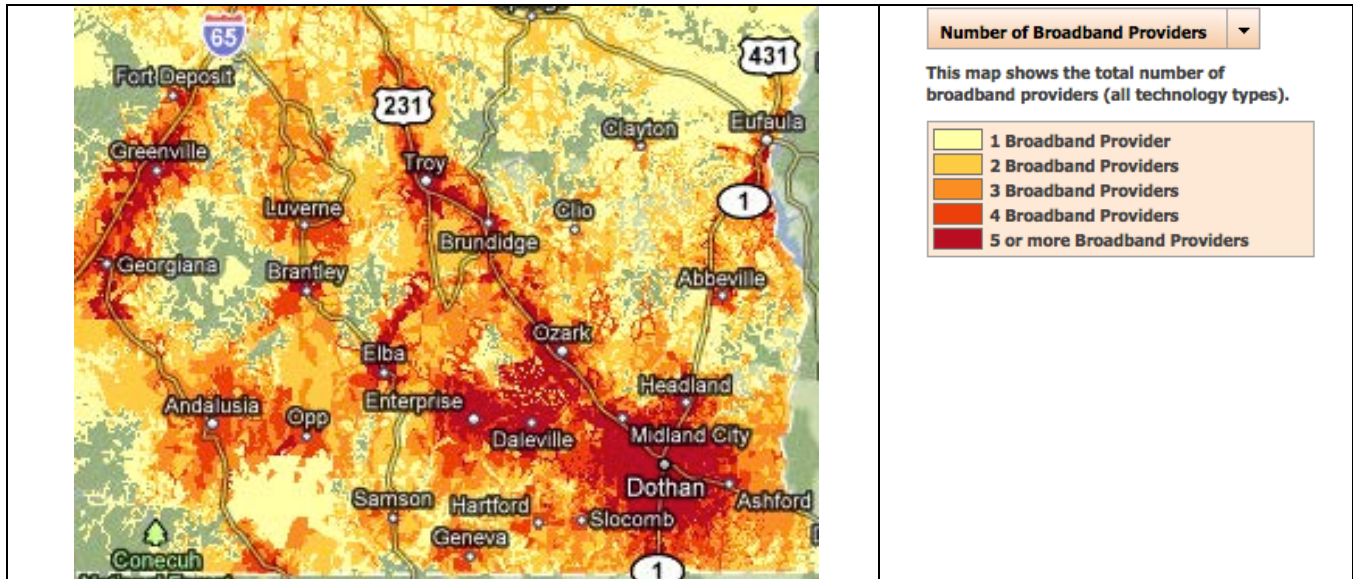
Source: ConnectingALABAMA Provider Survey, May 2011

A review of the ConnectingALABAMA interactive broadband map (http://al.linkamericadata.org/) highlights significant gaps in broadband service throughout Counties in Region 7.

Number of Providers by Pop Density

Population/sq. mile

Number of Broadband Providers

At a high level, broadband availability shares a direct correlation to higher population density, where there is a larger customer base and the average cost of deployment is less (because there are more customers to spread the fixed costs). Statewide in Alabama, the average population density of areas with no broadband providers is seven people per square mile. The average population density of areas with three or more broadband service options is 352 people per square mile. In more isolated areas it is less likely that there will be a wireline broadband service provider, however, increasingly wireless broadband options are emerging.

Population density alone does not fully explain gaps in broadband availability. Other factors such as demographics of an area (demand drivers), land use patterns, economic growth potential, university proximity, physical land features, provider access to federal universal service funds, and local leadership can also play important roles in availability

Notable Service Differences

Defining "broadband" is not simple, and many different definitions exist. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) defines broadband in terms of data transmission speed. The FCC definitions include several ranges, with the minimum tier of "broadband" services starting at a speed of 768 Kilobits per second (Kbps) for data traveling from the Internet to your computer (downloading) and at least 200 Kbps for data from your computer to the Internet (uploading). For purposes of this project, the FCC definition is a minimum standard to define a "broadband provider". However, the ultimate minimum "broadband capability" for any given customer or market segment must be defined by the services for which broadband is being used. Services which are adequate for some purposes (e.g. uploading YouTube videos) will not support others (e.g. tele-radiology.) With greater speeds, there is greater capability.

Existing technologies have various technical limitations on the speeds that they can provide. Mixed fiber / twisted pair copper services, as typically deployed by traditional telephone companies as well as fixed wireless broadband services range from 1.5-25 Mbps or more. Fiber-to-the-home services are generally faster, while mobile wireless technology is generally slower. Defining services by technology does not tie directly to services, but it is useful in identifying what services are available, and where.

Regional Differences in Broadband Service

The tables appearing below illustrate the disparity of broadband access across the Region:

County	Percent Population in Census Blocks With Advertised Maximum Download Speeds Available At:				
	≥ 10 Mbps	3 to 10 Mbps	< 3 Mbps	Mobile Option Only	No Option Greater than 768 kbps.
Barbour	62.7	24.2	13.0	7.4	0.0
Coffee	85.8	1.6	12.7	1.1	0.0
Covington	37.48	48.8	13.7	1.1	0.0
Dale	89.3	2.1	8.5	3.4	0.0
Geneva	66.8	8.9	24.3	10.1	0.0
Henry	64.5	0.7	34.4	11.9	0.4
Houston	91.3	2.1	6.6	0.1	0.00

Source: ConnectingALABAMA Broadband Provider Survey, May 2011

All seven Counties in Region 7 have significant areas with high-speed broadband service (in excess of 10 Mbps). Between 80 and 90 percent of the population in Coffee, Dale, and Houston Counties live in Census Blocks with a provider advertising a broadband service of 10 Mbps or greater. In Covington County, a lower portion have access to a 10 Mbps or greater connection, but nearly all live in a Census Block with an advertised service between 3 and 10 Mbps. In Geneva and Henry Counties, there is approximately 10 percent or more of the population living in Census Blocks with a mobile service as the only broadband option.

To interpret the above table, it is important to emphasize a couple of qualifications. First, the data reflects the maximum advertised broadband speed of service available in a Census Block. Not everyone in a given Census Block necessarily has access. Especially in rural areas, the geographic size of a Census Block is often substantial, and there will be service differences locally. Also, the data reflects the maximum download speed <u>advertised</u> in each area. For an individual customer, the actual speeds can vary depending on location and other factors. With these qualifications in mind, the data does provide a picture of differences in broadband service across the Region.

Appendix E: Region 7 Broadband Adoption

Subscription:

The US Department of Commerce NTIA conducted a national consumer broadband adoption survey in October of 2010. The findings are summarized in its February 2011 Digital Nation report.

National broadband adoption data reported by NTIA indicate that Alabama ranks 48th in the country in broadband adoption, with an estimated 55.5% of the State's residents accessing the Internet using broadband in 2010.

Alabama Regions As Represented in the 2009 Consumer Survey

Percent of Alabama Population Using Internet at Home Daily By Survey Region[*]

Survey Region 1	74%
Survey Region 2	56%
Survey Region 3	66%
Survey Region 4	65%
Survey Region 5	56%
Survey Region 6	49%
Survey Region 7	74%
Survey Region 8	70%

[*]In 2010, the number of regions changed from 8 to 12 in order to mirror the Regional Councils of Government,.Please refer to table of contents for current map.

A region specific survey of broadband subscription is not yet available for Alabama. However, a 2009 ConnectingALABAMA consumer survey did document differences in daily Internet use across eight different regions of the State. Region 7 is tied with the northern survey region (Survey Region 1, see map above) for the highest percentage of the population accessing the Internet daily at home (74 percent). This includes the population that access the Internet at home daily using either broadband or dial-up. However, a previous noted, broadband availability varies significantly across the Region. Also as explained below, differences in demographics impact broadband adoption, especially factors such as age, education and income. Consequently for any one county in Region 7, the percentage of population that access the Internet at home may be substantially higher or lower than the regional average.
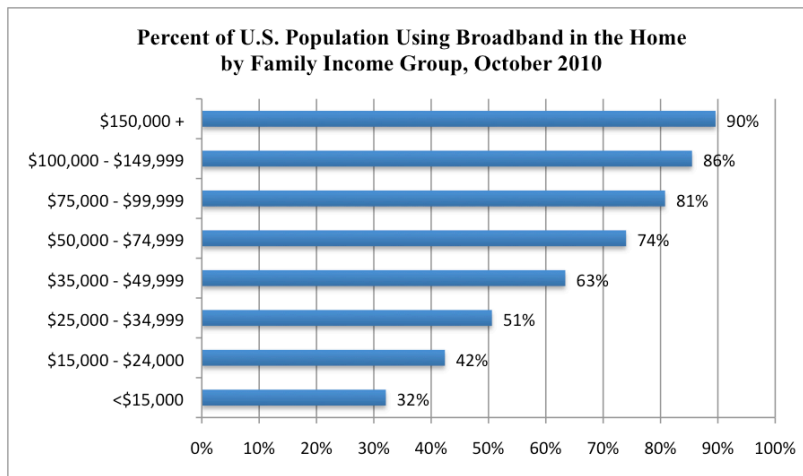
Barriers to Adoption:

The rate of broadband adoption is almost always substantially less than the percentage of people who have the opportunity to purchase a broadband service. While there are multiple reasons why a consumer may choose not to purchase a broadband service even when available, the most frequently cited reasons are cost of purchasing a computer and monthly broadband subscription, or they do not see the value. For example, a 2009 consumer survey of Alabama consumers found the following as the primary reason for not using the Internet:

Reason for Not Adopting Broadband	Percent of Total AL Non-Adopting Population	Percent of Non-Adopting Region 7 Population
Do Not have a computer	40%	45%
I think it is a waste of time	30%	29%
It is too expensive	26%	28%
It is difficult/frustrating	13%	17%

Source: ConnectingALABAMA consumer survey, 2009

Recognizing these typical barriers to accessing the Internet with any technology, it is not surprising that the demographic make-up of an area is closely associated with the rate of broadband adoption. For example, in areas with lower median income, people are less able to afford to pay for a computer and broadband subscription. The problem of affordability is compounded in rural areas that may have far fewer choices in the number of broadband providers. Specific data is not available for Alabama, but the following table from the recent NTIA Digital Nation report illustrates the strong relationship between income and broadband adoption.

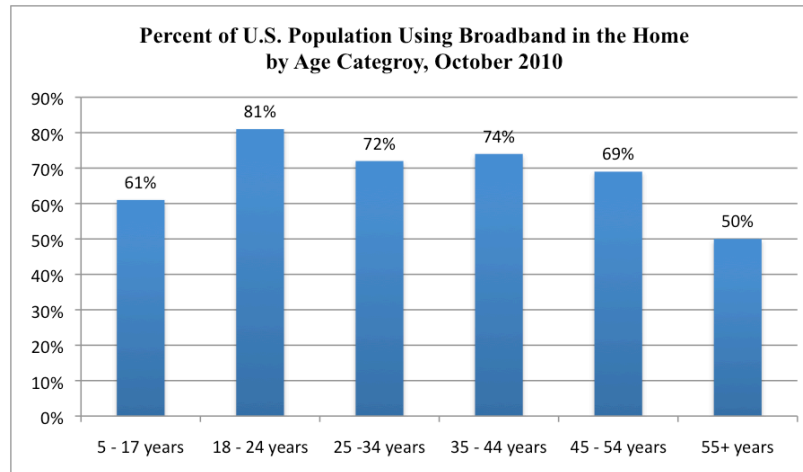**Percent of U.S. Population Using Broadband in the Home by Family Income Group, October 2010**

Income Group	Percent
$150,000 +	90%
$100,000 - $149,999	86%
$75,000 - $99,999	81%
$50,000 - $74,999	74%
$35,000 - $49,999	63%
$25,000 - $34,999	51%
$15,000 - $24,000	42%
<$15,000	32%

Source: Digital Nation, U.S. Department of Commerce, NTIA, 2011

Educational attainment is associated with both consumer purchasing power and perceived value of broadband. Adults with at least a Bachelor's degree are nearly three times as likely to use broadband than adults lacking a high school diploma.

Percent of U.S. Population Using Broadband in Home by Educational Attainment, October 2010

Educational Attainment	Percent
Elementary Only	15%
Some High School	30%
High School Diploma/GED	51%
Some College	72%
Bachelor's Degree or More	84%
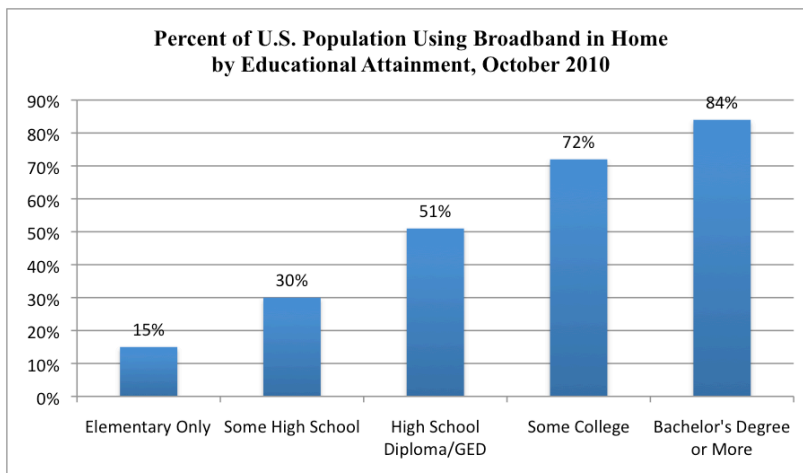
Source: Digital Nation, U.S. Department of Commerce, NTIA, 2011

Finally, age is an intuitive and real variable that impacts perceived value of the Internet. Also seniors are more likely to live on a fixed income impacting affordability. While perceived value is changing, as more older people recognize the Internet as a valuable tool to access health information, stay in touch with family, avoid trips out of the house in poor weather and so forth, their rate of broadband adoption will trend upwards. However, at the point in time, age is still a key factor in broadband adoption.

Percent of U.S. Population Using Broadband in the Home by Age Categroy, October 2010

Age Category	Percent
5 - 17 years	61%
18 - 24 years	81%
25 -34 years	72%
35 - 44 years	74%
45 - 54 years	69%
55+ years	50%

Source: Digital Nation, U.S. Department of Commerce, NTIA, 2011

These driving demographic forces help to explain why Alabama's rate of broadband adoption is lower than much of the Nation and why the rate of adoption differs across the State.

Finally, it is important to note that while Broadband adoption and broadband availablity are different measures, they tend to move together. Expanded adoption means more demand for broadband services and more profitable opportunities for broadband providers. With increased demand, providers are more likely to supply more broadband services. With increased availability of service, there is often more consumer choice which can improve affordability and enable new applications which require higher speeds.

Appendix F: Region 7 Future Opportunities

- Development of an Agriculture-focused broadband committee
  - Committee would focus on access and awareness of farmers and agriculture based communities
  - Committee would build awareness of uses of broadband for agriculture purposes

- A Regional Provider Relations/Infrastructure Committee
  - Create a committee with representation from each county that opens the lines of communication with broadband providers to help show demand and take advantage of opportunities available
  - Infrastructure committee comprised of City and County engineers or other experts who understand the infrastructure necessary to deliver broadband services to communities and homes, and who would attempt to increase the availability of the necessary infrastructure across the Region

- Preparing and distributing a Cost-Benefit analysis of broadband adoption
  - A detailed Cost-Benefit analysis of broadband adoption would serve to help increase both awareness and adoption of broadband services by showing the possible savings of broadband adoption through various services such as entertainment, healthcare, shopping, online banking and bill-pay, and other services
  - The distribution of this analysis could follow the broadband survey to be conducted, therefore allowing for a very targeted analysis and distribution

- Development of a map of wireless hotspots throughout the region for those without access and to promote businesses offering wireless:
  - Considering that deploying high-speed Internet to every rural resident and business will take time, there are opportunities for citizens to utilize free wireless services offered by local restaurants, shops, hotels and the like. Whether logging on the Internet to check email or connecting with social media, this type of area map could be very helpful to those without broadband;
  - Mapping wireless hotspots can also be a benefit to local businesses that wish to attract customers, or it might give an individual the extra incentive to open a new business, thus bringing revenue to the area's economy.

- Ensuring all current and future industrial parks throughout the Region have sufficient connectivity
  - Broadband availability is a major factor in recruiting industry
  - Broadband availability allows small towns and rural communities to compete for industries and business by ensuring that a remote physical location is not separated from the global market

Appendix G: Funding Playbook Overview

The Federal Funding Playbook/Manual is a guide to federal programs that may be useful to those seeking federal funds to deploy, use or otherwise benefit from telecommunications networks and technologies.

This document borrows from federal funding announcements, the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) and agency sources, while also including guidance based on years of experience in both administering federal grant programs and being an applicant. Some programs primarily focus on telecommunications infrastructure; i.e., the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) Broadband Loan and Loan Guarantee Program. Others may have telecommunications as an eligible purpose, like the Rural Housing Service's Community Facilities Program. The Federal Universal Service Fund (USF) does not use federally appropriated funds, but distributes revenues generated from the telecommunications industry pursuant to rules set by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

This document intends to provide general guidance on how to identify and apply for federal funding for telecommunications-related projects. It includes summaries of some existing federal-funding agencies. As each agency has its own set of programs, definitions, grant/loan deadlines and funding restrictions, please refer to each agencies website for further information. For example, a single definition of 'rural' does not exist. What may be rural in one program may not be considered rural in another. Some agencies have programs with a limited life cycle, while others have recurring programs on an annual, periodic or first-come, first-serve basis. Every federal program is subject to Congressional authorization and funding changes.

Prior to applying for federal funds, be sure to consult the statute, regulations, Notice of Funds Availability (NOFA), Request for Proposals (RFP) and any additional published agency application guides for the programs they offer.

To access the Federal Funding Playbook/Manual, please visit: http://connectingalabama.gov/ca/docs/Federal%20Funding%20Manual_6-15-11-v2.pdf or http://connectingalabama.gov/ca/default.aspx?page=44 for an up-to-date listing of funding opportunities.

Appendix H: Cost of Deployment Model

The Cost of Deployment Model developed by ConnectingALABAMA's vendor CostQuest Associates, presents estimated local and regional costs to deploy and operate broadband service across wireless, wireline and cable technologies.

The model is currently undergoing a final review and is expected to be available in the near future. The model will assist regional planning teams and infrastructure committees as they meet with service providers and begin making vital infrastructure decisions in their Region.

Please continue to visit www.connectingALABAMA.gov for the release of the Cost of Deployment Model.